

**Date:** February 17, 2017

**To:** **Appropriations Committee**  
Senator Catherine Osten  
Senator Paul Formica  
Representative Toni Walker

**RE: H.B. 7027**

Title: AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH 2019, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR.

Statement of Purpose: To implement the Governor's budget recommendations.

**Dear Members of the Committee;**

**Thank you for providing me the opportunity to submit testimony related to the preservation of the HISTORIC BARNUM MUSEUM.** My name is Kathleen Maher and I am the Executive Director of the Barnum Museum in Bridgeport.

The Barnum Museum has served over 3 million learners from Connecticut and the world-over since it's opening in 1893. It is a viable and vibrant place of learning and it is one of the State's most iconic destinations for our citizens and global travelers, stimulating community investment, and supporting higher education and economic development.

In 2010, the Barnum Museum suffered catastrophic damaged from an EF1 tornado that ravaged downtown Bridgeport, with additional destruction from both Hurricanes Irene and Sandy. The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), the CT Trust for Historic Preservation and CT Humanities were immediate responders to the devastating aftermath of these horrific storms. With their support, the Barnum Museum leveraged dollar-for-dollar the State investment that enabled us to initiate the first and second phases of the major historic restoration and revitalization. The Museum has successfully raised and invested \$3.8 million dollars toward restoration efforts. Funds have also assisted in re-engaging critical education programs and activities that serve the community. A portion of this funding has contributed to the planning of a re-imagined site for the future that promises to re-invent Museum going for 21<sup>st</sup> century Connecticut citizens.

The Barnum Museum continues to raise funds for the design phase of construction that will make the restoration shovel ready. Fundraising efforts are the main focus of Barnum Museum administration and Board of Directors. **WE NEED TO CONTINUE THE STATE PARTNERSHIP, AND YOUR INVESTMENT WILL ENABLE US TO LEVERAGE ADDITIONAL DOLLARS THAT WILL HELP OPEN THE BARNUM MUSEUM DOORS.**

The Barnum Museum contributes to the developing socio-economic potential of the City through its ability to merge creativity with knowledge/information. A prominent LANDMARK in the heart of Bridgeport's historic downtown, the Barnum Museum is at the crossroads of arts, culture, **business and**



**technology.** The convergence of these activities within the framework of the Museum translates into economic impact and value.

- Collaborations and Partnerships with local and regional universities to expand technology, engineering and humanities programs and activities to position students, life-long learners and educators for emerging technological **job opportunities**.
- Collaborations with local and regional educational institutions to develop and advance community-based learning through experiment and investigation as part of the **cradle to career continuum in Bridgeport**.
- Collaborations with local and regional restaurants, hotels, and attractions to create new, vibrant **tourism destination opportunities** for local and I95 corridor traffic (building on New Haven tourism model.)
- The Barnum Museum is a beacon of arts and culture leveraging community resources to advance a **robust arts, culture and entertainment center**. The Museum collaborates with local and regional cultural partners, as well as the Ball Park at Harbor Yard and Webster Bank Arena at Harbor Yard as centers of the City owned sports and entertainment district.

**Without urgently needed state support, the Barnum Museum's future is uncertain.** Although we continue to push forward to raise capital dollars to save Connecticut's nationally significant landmark, we now face a critical juncture where every minute counts to prevent disastrous failure of the structure and a loss of a National Register of Historic Places site.

State funding for the Barnum Museum is an investment in the future; an investment that will yield economic activity and gain to the region and state, and inspire new growth and revitalization for Connecticut's largest city.

I humbly ask the Members to fully support the continued funding and not allow this impending cut to be the final devastating blow to the existence of the historic Barnum Museum.

Most Sincerely,

*Kathleen Maher*

Executive Director

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*"The Noblest Art Is That Of Making Others Happy"* P.T. Barnum, 1886

